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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 002675

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/09/2016
TAGS: PREL UN KS
SUBJECT: UNSYG CAMPAIGN: FM BAN'S UPDATE

REF: SEOUL 2442 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Amb. Alexander Vershbow. Reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) In a meeting with the Ambassador on August 7, ROK Foreign Minister Ban Ki-moon said that he was relieved to have done well in the recent UNSC straw poll for the declared candidates for UNSYG. At the same time, the results were also burdensome, because they had created the expectation that he could do even better next time around. Ban said that he did not know who had voted for whom, and he was not interested in finding out. Still, Ban assessed, the straw poll seemed to confirm that Asia had credible and qualified candidates.

¶2. (C) About to depart on the following day (August 8) for Japan, Argentina, Peru, Australia and New Zealand, Ban was clearly upbeat about his prospects. The Tokyo stop was ostensibly to attend the funeral of former PM Hashimoto, but Ban planned on bilaterals with FM Aso and Chief Cabinet Secretary Abe (see septel), acknowledging that Tokyo's

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support would be crucial for his UNSYG campaign to succeed. Ban said that he had received encouraging signals in Kuala Lumpur during the recent ARF meetings. Many ASEAN foreign ministers congratulated him on his strong showing in the straw poll, including Thai Foreign Minister Kanthati, despite his predecessor, Surakiart, being a declared candidate.

¶3. (C) Regarding other candidates, Ban said that he expected Thai candidate Surakiart and Sri Lankan candidate Dhanapala to remain in the race for the time being. In KL, ASEAN foreign ministers were apparently of the view that they should wait until the second straw poll and then consider dropping Surakiart in favor of another ASEAN candidate. Clearly the ASEANS were quite pessimistic regarding the Thai candidate's chances.

¶4. (C) Ban said that he would continue with a low-profile campaign. He stressed, as he has done before (see ref), that USG support would be decisive.

VERSHBOW